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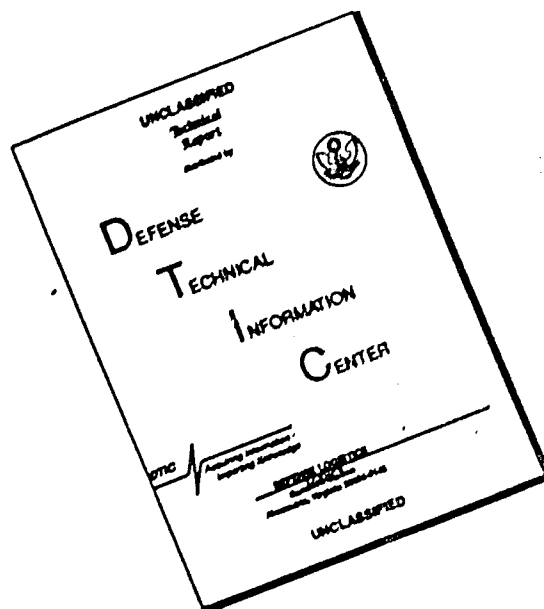
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**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
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13 May 1974

DAAG-PAP-A (M) (24 Apr 74) DAMO-ODU

Expires 13 May 1975

**SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: Colonel George E. Newman,
Chief, U.S. Army Advisory Group, Thailand, 12 June 1971 -
22 April 1973 (U)**

SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Reference: AR 525-14, Senior Officer Debriefing Report (U),
2 July 1971.
2. Transmitted herewith is the report of Colonel George E. Newman,
subject as above.
3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized
from the experiences of the author. The report should be reviewed in
accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5, AR 525-14; however, it should not
be interpreted as the official view of the Department of the Army, or
of any agency of the Department of the Army.
4. Information of actions initiated under provisions of AR 525-14, as
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VERNE L. BOWERS
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

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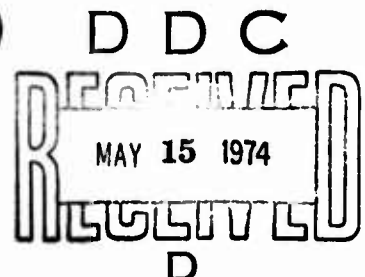
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UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMAND, THAILAND

and

JOINT UNITED STATES MILITARY ADVISORY GROUP, THAILAND

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REPLY TO
ATTN OF: TARAGC

23 April 1973

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report (Colonel George E. Newman
424-03-9385), RCS CSFOR-74

THRU: COMUSMACTHAI/CHJUSMAGTHAI
APO San Francisco 96346

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development
ATTN: FOR OT UT
Department of the Army
Washington, D. C. 20310

"NATIONAL SECURITY INFORMATION"
Unauthorized Disclosure Subject to Criminal
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1. (U) This report covers my tour as Chief, US Army Advisory Group, JUSMAGTHAI and Senior Advisor to the Royal Thai Army during the period 12 June 1971 - 22 April 1973. The comments and observations herein are my own personal views, based on almost two years of close contact and discussions with senior RTA officers, and my visits to RTA installations, organizations, and activities. Finally, (and most important) my views are strongly influenced by my daily contacts with fellow members of the Army Advisory Group and review of the countless studies and reports they submitted. At the very beginning of this report, I would like to recognize the uniformly high quality of personnel, both officer and enlisted, and DA civilians, which Department of the Army provided the Army Advisory Group. My last two years in the service have been most professionally rewarding. I consider it an honor to have served as Chief of the Army Advisory Group, and a privilege to associate and work with a fine group of fellow Americans of such high competence and professional abilities.

2. (U) In order to reduce the length of the report and enhance its utility as a reference, I have used a different format than outlined in AR 525-14. The report consists of my comments and observations on various functional areas which I believe may interest other officers concerned with military activities in Southeast Asia. I have tried to avoid statistics and repetition of details already available in existing documents and reports. I assume that readers will already be familiar with the basic COMUSMACTHAI quarterly report, "Developments in Thailand" and with the general outlines of the Security Assistance Program for Thailand as delineated in the Programs Objectives Memorandum and associated programming documents. Finally, I am hopeful that the readers have followed the various special counterinsurgency reports developed by COMUSMACTHAI (such as Operation PHU KWANG - FY 1972, and Operation SAMCHAI - FY 1973)

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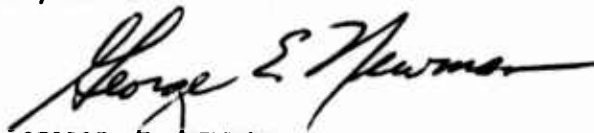
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23 April 1973

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report (Colonel George E. Newman
424-03-9385), RCS CSFOR-74

3. (C) US military assistance for Thailand has behind it a very successful past, currently is going through an unsettling readjustment period which confuses Thai leaders, and faces an uncertain future unless basic US foreign relationships with Thailand and other Southeast Asia nations are clarified. The attached functional comments draw attention to both progress and problem areas which will require US attention and decisions in any future assistance and advisory program if we wish to maintain the influence and leverage we now have in Thailand.

4. (U) In conclusion, I would like to go on record in saying that I consider myself very fortunate to have served under the leadership of Major General Evans, Major General Gibbons and Major General Mellen and in association with a highly competent MACTHAI staff. Major General Evans has been an outstanding COMUSMACTHAI and has been ably backed up by Major General Gibbons and Major General Mellen in turn. In a period of dramatic changes in military relationships in Southeast Asia, COMUSMACTHAI has provided realistic, objective guidance to the service advisory groups and the MACTHAI/JUSMAG staff; he has provided sound professional advice to the US Embassy on military matters; has kept CINCPAC and other higher headquarters fully informed on developments affecting US and Thai military capabilities; and has forwarded concrete practical recommendations for improving combat capabilities of the Royal Thai Armed Forces. Being a member of the MACTHAI team has been both a professionally rewarding experience and personal privilege; and a most satisfying conclusion to my military career.



GEORGE E. NEWMAN
Colonel, Infantry
Chief

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as

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END OF TOUR REPORT

COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

ON

THE ROYAL THAI ARMY

BY

COLONEL GEORGE E. NEWMAN

CHIEF, U. S. ARMY ADVISORY GROUP

THAILAND

12 JUNE 1971 - 22 APRIL 1973

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I N D E X

- TAB A - THAI VIEWS ON US/THAI RELATIONS**
- TAB B - ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS WHICH EFFECT THE RTA**
- TAB C - LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND AND CONTROL**
- TAB D - EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE RTA**
- TAB E - COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS**

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TAB A

THAI VIEWS ON US/THAI RELATIONS

1. (C) RTA leaders pride themselves on having met all US requests, and from their point of view, having proved themselves a loyal and steadfast ally. In discussions on the future of US/Thai relations, many Thai leaders will invariably revert to citing past performances as proof that Thailand (and the RTA) are entitled to special consideration in future US defense arrangements for Southeast Asia. The RTA is very proud of its role in both Korea and Vietnam and considers that both commitments required significant national sacrifices. Many also point to the key leadership role of RTA cadres in meeting Laotian volunteer requirements.
2. (C) Although the RTA is not as directly affected as the RTAF, the willingness of the RTG to make Thai bases available to US forces is also often cited as proof of Thai reliability as an ally. The point is made frequently (and sometimes not too delicately) that the RTG has made sovereign Thai territory and air space available to the US for Southeast Asia operations with practically no restrictions, and no lease or rental charges, or formal usage agreements. The Thai regard SEATO as a viable defense mechanism and not the "paper tiger" as viewed by many US and other Western observers. Also, the Thai have long felt genuine gratitude to the US for its generous attitude after World War II and protection of Thailand from reparation demands of more rapacious US allies. As they tell it, Thailand was completely willing to make bases available to US forces both to repay US support after World War II and also to demonstrate their central role in SEATO. The self-serving and economic benefits to Thailand that have resulted from the bases is a subject I have never heard any Thai acknowledge.
3. (C) The Nixon Doctrine is still a puzzle for the Thai. They accept the basic premise that they must provide the manpower and units for defense of their national territory, but they worry that the US guarantee of their sovereignty under SEATO is being eroded and will be eventually withdrawn. They are grateful for past MAP but apprehensive that future support will be inadequate for their needs as they see them. We may not agree with the Thai assessment, but it would be a mistake to underestimate the seriousness with which they view external threats to their future. The cease fire agreements in Vietnam and Laos, though publicly supported, are often privately deplored by RTA leaders. In their view, the agreements signify a US pull out; and now that NVN flagrant violations of the agreements are becoming well documented without any perceptible US counters, they consider their worst fears confirmed.
4. (C) What all the foregoing adds up to is that the RTG leadership is beginning to mistrust US diplomacy and, in turn, US military forces. Recently, Gen Surakij, RTA, CofS, covered many of the points in this essay, alluded to his own long standing admiration and high regard for the US and observed somewhat bitterly and sadly, to the effect that RTA leaders were at a loss to

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understand US policies which, in their view, desert tested friends and allies while wooing and economically rewarding former enemies. I am no politician, but it is obvious that our diplomatic efforts have not convinced the RTG that it still occupies a central position in US defense plans for Southeast Asia. This erosion in RTG trust of US will in time adversely affect US/Thai military relations and make further MAP a year to year proposition of dubious value and reliability.

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TAB B

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS WHICH AFFECT THE RTA

1. (C) All the truisms concerning commonly cited regarding oriental Armies and the effect of their cultural environment on their fighting capabilities apply to Thailand as surely as elsewhere. Still, Thailand is different. The three key national institutions in Thailand are the monarchy, the Buddhist faith, and the Army. The monarchy exerts a powerful effect on patriotic instincts and provides a direct tangible link with a history which the Thai consider both noble, and more important, successful. In the Thai view, Thailand - the "land of the free" has endured, and preserved its independence despite hostile neighbors, Western colonization and economic penetration efforts, and even Japanese attempts at domination, because of the solidarity between King, Buddhist hierarchy, and the Army.

2. (C) Since the Army recognizes the strong bonds between the King and the common people, the Army is a strong defender of the monarchy. Likewise, since the Buddhist faith insures a tractable population, the Army strictly observes all religious protocols. The Army, in turn, emerges as one of the strongest institutions in Thailand, the protector of both the Crown and Church. Those who consider the present power position of the Army a transient phenomenon or the result of an arrogant grab for power in the post World War II era, ignore the central position the Army has always held in Thai national existence.

3. (C) The RTA is, in fact, three concurrent entities: a political power base; a long standing respected social institution; and, finally, a military force. It is regrettable that so much RTA energies and talents are absorbed in the first two roles that military capabilities often suffer. In fact, one of the principal problems of leadership in the RTA (which will be commented on separately) is that political demands, and manning requirements for other government agencies and activities often absorb much time of senior leaders and result in extended detached service, TDY, leave and other absences of large numbers of officer and NCOs from their units. It is easy to criticize this state of affairs, but it must be remembered that this is a traditional Thai approach to meeting leadership, supervisory, and administrative requirements. As an aside, it is interesting to note that even the Thai career civil servants wear uniforms, have an established rank structure, and are posted about the Kingdom in much the same manner as Army officers. The arrangements may have some merit in maintaining Army control of political matters, but it contributes to ambivalence in career goals for military personnel, erodes professionalism, and practically guarantees undermanned, and indifferently led units in much of the Army. The most practical solution would be a major increase in authorized strengths of officers and NCOs. However, this would run counter to the RTA view of its role as a social institution.

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4. (C) The RTA has always set what it considers rigid standards for admission to its career force. Once accepted, whether because of academic, physical, family, or sponsor considerations (or various combinations) the individual acquires a vested interest and tenure until retirement. Merit systems, as we understand them, are practically non-existent in the RTA. Advancement is through associations with powerful sponsors and seniority. During the two years of my tour, I know of no instance of any officer or NCO being relieved for cause. Most Armies actively proselyte among their recruits for officer and NCO talent. The RTA does not. In fact, it is very difficult for a draftee who decides he likes Army life to get accepted for RTA NCO school and there is no OCS program as we know it. Even Vietnam and Laos volunteers have great difficulty being accepted in the regular RTA NCO Corps. With this closed door policy, it is no wonder that the average draftee regards his Army service as an ordeal to be suffered for two years for King and country. The RTA is fortunate that the recruit (Taharn) is of such patriotic stock and so amenable to discipline. As noted earlier, once the hurdles are surmounted and an individual acquires permanent officer or NCO status, he also gains tenure, and a degree of social acceptance and security not available to most of his fellow citizens in civil life. This situation hardly makes for initiative -and maintenance of the status quo is the normal policy in most units. Since the mandatory retirement is age 60 for all ranks in the absence of health problems, the RTA abounds in older officers and NCOs. This has the advantage of increasing experience levels, but it also promotes lethargy and stifles initiative. Secure in their tenure, many of the RTA older personnel launch second careers while on active duty, to the detriment of their military responsibilities. Finally, the social outlook of the RTA contributes to a garrison philosophy and a stationing policy which emphasizes placing personnel in their native regions and provinces. Again, this has advantages from the individual's economic and family viewpoints, but is counter productive to development of aggressive tactical forces and combat power.

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TAB C

LEADERSHIP AND COMMAND AND CONTROL

1. (C) Perhaps the greatest problem area in the RTA is the uneven caliber of leadership throughout the Army. As noted in other comments, the RTA social outlook and historical perspective does not encourage aggressive leadership. Talent, per se, often finds politico-military assignments more rewarding professionally and lucrative financially than a career with troops, which is both more dangerous and demanding. For the past several years, JUSMAG efforts have focused on the need for more aggressive and dedicated tactical leadership. This point of view is beginning to find wider acceptance in younger elements of the Army, particularly those exposed to American influence either through service in Vietnam or US schooling. Needless to say, this trend should receive every possible encouragement.

2. (C) One of the leadership dilemmas is the average^{age} of the officer and NCO Corps. Because of the age 60 mandatory retirement criteria and the advantage of career tenure, many older officers and NCOs continue to serve in tactical units long after they should be moved to less demanding billets. There is no intent to disparage the cumulative experience these older officers and NCOs represent. They can be usefully employed to fill many civil administrative and para-military slots normally manned by RTA. They are generally very patriotic and loyal, but they lack the stamina, imagination, and initiative necessary for field operations. The difficulty lies in getting the RTA to adopt - and enforce - criteria which will place younger, more able leaders in tactical units. This has been a subject of continuing discussion between JUSMAG and RTA, but frankly, most orders exist on paper only and all units still retain too many leaders of limited abilities, advanced years, and little initiative.

3. (C) The same problems apparent in tactical leadership are manifested in command and control mechanisms at all levels. Seniors are reluctant to trust juniors, and the idea of independent initiative is basically foreign to Thai thinking. Most headquarters operate on an eight hour day - or less, even when committed to actual operations. The US concept of continuous 24 hour command and control, frequent periodic reports from subordinate units, and active command supervision and visits by commanders and staffs to field units, has not been widely accepted by the RTA. In part, this reflects cultural heritages, where it is considered bad form to constantly check on someone. But more often, it reflects the continuation in senior leaders of bad habits and practices, inculcated in their junior years when much of their experience was acquired in other assignments than troop duty, and the garrison oriented social outlook prevalent in the RTA. In my view, the key to both better tactical leadership and improved command and control is in sustained pressure on the RTA to place younger, more aggressive officers and NCOs in tactical units, and, concurrently, insist that tactical units spend a major portion of their time out of garrison and in the field, either in tactical training, or in actual counterinsurgency operations.

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4. (C) In conclusion, I believe it is fair to say that at the intermediate leadership level there are many fine leaders in the RTA who recognize the weaknesses in tactical leadership and are committed to improving both the quality and quantity of small unit leaders. Most of these innovators have combat experience in Vietnam or Laos (or both). Many have been favorably influenced in their own growth and development by association with US advisors and attendance at US schools. They are beginning to move into key slots in the RTA where their influence and experience can be exercised meaningfully. Where this is happening, the improvements and energizing effects on command and control are readily apparent. Officers such as MG Pin and COL Yutasin in the 3d Div.; COL Sima in the 4th Div; and, COL Yuthasak in the 1st Div are the key to development of a new attitude toward field operations and aggressive tactical leadership. About the only contribution US advisory efforts can make is to encourage and assist these innovative Thai leaders (who are concerned about small unit tactical leadership and more effective command and control in the field), to exercise their initiative and demonstrate their own capabilities. In the RTA, as elsewhere, nothing succeeds like success.

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TAB D

EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN THE RTA

1. (U) Compared to most other Oriental Armies, the RTA is unusually well educated. At the same time, in a seeming paradox, it is - on an overall basis - poorly trained. Why is this so? There are two basic reasons: First, the educational prerequisites for both officers and NCOs are quite high compared to the general Thai population. The Army is a long established national institution and relatively small in size. It can afford to be, and is rather picky in selecting its permanent officer and NCO cadre. Once selected, a rather extensive school system and relatively long educational process is followed for both officers and NCOs. Thai culture values the acquisition of knowledge, and the associated rise in status, so both officers and NCOs take readily to educational opportunities. Furthermore, in the Thai view, learning, in the broad philosophical sense, is enjoyable - a quite proper way to spend one's time and effort - very SAMOOK, to use the Thai term. On the other hand, training differs from education - it involves acquiring skills rather than knowledge. Much of it is essentially repetitive and after the first few exposures, it is no longer fun. Even more to the point, training often imposes work requirements in which the officers and NCOs have to personally involve themselves. Not only must they have knowledge of a subject, they must develop the ability to pass this knowledge on to the draftees who are inferior to them, both intellectually and socially, and who are never going to be part of the permanent RTA family. Finally, good training programs invariably emphasize field exercises for tactical units or actual hands-on operations in the shop, motor pool, storage area, supply activity, or office for support units. This, in the view of the better educated Thai officer or NCO, is drudgery and should be avoided.
2. (U) The RTA school system is patterned after that of the US Army and the POIs are largely Thai adaptations of US course materials. This does not harm the school system and the Thai are not slavish in their use of US doctrine, procedures, tactics, and techniques. They can and do tailor US instructional materials to their own needs and their interpretations. This reliance on US materials provides an opportunity to influence the Thai thinking and attitudes which cannot be duplicated elsewhere in US advisory efforts. As I conclude my tour, I am convinced that the school advisors, whom I once considered expendable, are far more important in maintaining US influence than are the tactical advisors with units in garrison and training. US policy, of course, precludes tactical advisors from accompanying units on counterinsurgency operations where their presence would be of much greater value.
3. (U) Another aspect of RTA education and training which needs renewed emphasis is the off-shore program in the US. It is true that the RTA has progressed to the point where indigenous capabilities to conduct most courses of instruction are adequate. This overlooks the stimulative effect and "yardstick" value of continuing to send RTA students to the United States. The RTA has a good record of utilization of US schooled personnel. Each of these individuals, in effect, becomes an extension of the US advisory effort - good or bad - depending on his

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abilities and how well we taught him. In the great majority of cases, he is a very positive asset and has a status in his unit not easily acquired otherwise. During this past year, CINCPAC wisely reversed the former policy of phasing out US schooling, and projections for FY 74 show a slight increase in student spaces. This is a trend to encourage and buys more good will and influence for less cost than any other aspect of our advisory efforts.

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TAB E

COUNTERINSURGENCY OPERATIONS

1. (C) During the past two years, the RTA has steadily increased its commitment of troops to CI operations. Statistically, the increases are impressive. However, the results achieved to date have been disappointing. The problems of CI operations have been exhaustively reported by both JUSMACTHAI and the US Embassy. Whether the insurgency is still expanding depends on who is analyzing the intelligence reports and the credence one can ascribe to RTG reports of success. I think the insurgency is becoming more serious. I know the RTA has not thus far made an all out commitment to deal with it. In fact, a large school of thought in the RTA is more than willing to accommodate, if not ignore, the threat. The RTA has made some commendable efforts to improve small unit tactics, upgrade leadership, and establish better coordination and communications with police and civilian para-military units. But, there has been no all out commitment to date to undertake the vigorous field training program, and deploy all available combat forces in a sustained effort to eliminate the insurgency. The initiative still rests with the Communist Terrorist (CT). The Army does not seem to realize that as long as this condition continues, RTA prestige - and its power position - will continue to erode in the minds of the Thai people.

2. (C) The Communist Suppression Operations Command (CSOC), the command and control mechanism which the Thai have evolved to coordinate CI operations, is a typical Thai compromise solution to a difficult problem of interagency relationships. However, CSOC has been in being so long it would be useless, in my opinion, to replace it with any other coordinating device. The best approach is to make it work despite its many weaknesses. To me, this implies full time advisory effort at all appropriate levels, a condition that does not exist. Since CSOC was established primarily to deal with a military threat, I believe the advisory effort should be oriented accordingly. In my opinion, ARAG advisors should be tasked to advise all CSOC echelons with reporting channels through COMUSMACTHAI/CHJUSMAGTHAI. The present arrangements wherein the Embassy is the main source of advice through the Counsellor for Development and Security and area Consuls is a contradiction in terms - civilians concerning themselves, however well intentioned, primarily with military matters in which their expertise is limited. This salient deficiency in U.S. advisory efforts does not escape the RTA. Accordingly, they pay little heed to urgings to deal effectively with the insurgency.

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MACTC (23 Apr 73) 1st Ind

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report (Colonel George E. Newman,
424-03-9385), RCS CSFOR-74

HQ, United States Military Assistance Command, Thailand and Joint
United States Military Advisory Group, Thailand 19 Jul 73

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development, ATTN: FOR OT UT,
Department of the Army, Washington, D.C. 20310

I agree completely with the observations and remarks of Colonel Newman
in the enclosed report. In seven pages he has concisely and precisely
described the Royal Thai Army.

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THOMAS W. MELLEN
Major General, USA
Commanding

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